The ASSURANCE OF THE FAITHFULL: OR, The Glorious Estate Of the Saints in Heaven, DESCRIBED:

And the certainty of their future Happiness manifested by REASON and Scripture.

(Assign?)

By *M. D.* Batchelor of Divinity.

Parva non sunt contemnenda sine quibus magna constare non possunt. Seneca.

Ratio fide precedente plurimum valet. Aug. Epist. 222.

Ratio subsequatur fidem ut intelligat fidelis quid credat. Ambros. de fide contra Arrianos.

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The ASSURANCE OF THE FAITHFUL OR The Glorious Privileges of Saints in Heaven.

To the Right Honorable Lady

ELIZABETH,

Countess Dowager of Northumberland, *&c.*

MADAM,

I Was afraid to venture these Meditations from the Pulpit to the Press, through a mixed multitude alone without a Protection; for although they have had the happiness to be well received in a famous Audience, especially from the Persons of Quality who have perswaded me to suffer them to appear in publick:

I knew not but that they might meet with ſome moroſe and ill-natur'd *Zoilus*, whoſe common practice is to beſpatter the beſt approved Writings of our age; but ſince your Honour favours them with your acceptance, I have been delivered from all apprehenſion: I fear no more the miſtakes of the ignorant, and the malice of our ſenſual Wits, becauſe I am certain that every one will have ſome eſteem and reſpect for thoſe Labours, that are honoured with the Approbation and Allowance of a perſon of that ſingular Wiſdom and Piety; And not onely my private benefit hath obliged me to this Dedication, but alſo that

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of my Friends unto whom I do not onely diſcover the unſpeakable Excellencies of Heaven, but beſides I reveal unto them the means of attaining unto that bleſſed End. The former they ſhall find in the Sermon, and the latter they may meet with in the Preface, in your Honour, and in your moſt Exemplary life; A life that makes you appear an Ornament amongſt our English Nobility, and eſpecially to the moſt noble Families that are related unto your Honour; * One of them God hath bleſt with a numerous increaſe of Perſons of the greateſt worth: A Life worthy of our admiration, in that it ſhews us Piety, Vertue, Wiſdom, Goodneſs,

* The moſt noble Family of the *Howards*.

Goodneſs, and Honour, as ſo many Celeſtial Lights shining together in the ſame Sphere; A Miracle in Grace as well as Nature! A Bleſſing it is to our Nation in this unhappy Age, that we have ſome ſuch Noble Souls, that ſeem to be Angels Incarnate, ſent amongſt us by the Divine Appointment on purpoſe to maintain the Honour of Religion againſt the encroachings of Schiſm and Profaneſs. It is unto ſuch Heavenly Spirits, *Madam*, that Chriſt promiſeth a Crown of Life; not onely to encourage them in a faithful management of his, and their Spiritual concerns, but alſo to oblige them to a total Reſigna-

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tion of themſelves and intereſts to the diſpoſition of his Providence, and to enable them to bear worldly misfortunes, and preſent affliction with leſs pain. I do therefore offer the deſcription of that extraordinary felicity unto your Honour, as a ſeaſonable meditation, where your Piety, *Madam*, may meet with Antidotes able to preſerve your Noble Mind from the ſence of all evil events: And as the Original shall one day be worthy your acceptance, be pleaſed now to look favourably upon this Repreſentation, which will afford your Honour a ſight of thoſe precious Jewels that enrich the Heavenly Crown.

Crown. Here is alſo the Aſſurance that Faith and Reaſon do give of that Glorious Eſtate unto the Faithful: God preſerve your Honour in much health and proſperity, with all your Noble Relations; It is the hearty deſire, and ſhall always be the Prayer of

Your Honours moſt Faithful
and devoted Servant

M. D'Aſſigny.

THE

The Assurance of the Faithful:

OR,

Heavens Glory made manifest.

In a Sermon upon these words of the 2d Chapter of the *Revelations*, the latter part of the 10th verse.

I will give thee a Crown of life.

WHen a Glorious Victory is assured, what faint-hearted Souldier will shun the encounter? When the price of a Race is inestimable, who will not run to obtain it? or when Rewards are promised, whose acquisition will procure unto us immortal satisfactions, who will delay the performance of the Task? who will not be encouraged to labour after the purchase? Such is the nature of the Victory over our Spiritual enemies of the price of Virtues race, and of those Coelestial Rewards that invite us to the accomplishment of our great Task of obedience to the supreme Authority. They are such as becomes an Infinite bounty to bestow; such as have required both an Infinite power to create, and blood of an infinite value to redeem. They are such as are carefully laid up in those heavenly mansions where all things are suitable unto that Majesty, that discovers it self there invested with an incomprehensible Glory. It seems Christ the eternal Son of God, who is very well acquainted with these supernatural Excellencies, had no mean esteem of their value and power, seeing that he judges them sufficient to recompense, and able to encourage the Mar-

tyrs in violent persecutions. He judges them worth their labours and sufferings. Therefore in his letters to his seven beloved Churches of *Asia* minor, that were threatned with the furious assaults of the enemies of the truth, he annexes to his reproofs and exhortations a blessed declaration of the greatness of Heavens glory, as the assured Reward of their faithfulness, that these future hopes might fill them with the contempt of the present difficulties, raise their spirits in the midst of temporal afflictions with the joyful expectation of that inestimable happiness, and oblige them to encounter all opposition with an inflexible courage and patience. These advantages promised to their perseverance are many and glorious, yet he summes them up in such different Titles as had some relation either to the present estate of those Congregations, or unto those things that were most in esteem in those Regions where they were situated. Unto the *Ephesians*, he presents them under the notion of the fruits of the Tree of Life, either because the soils did yield most excellent fruit-trees, and especially one called by the Naturalists *Arbor vitæ*, whose fruit is of an extraordinary vertue, or because that Church was in a decaying condition: Christ promiseth therefore Heaven as a Soveraign Remedy to all the evils that did torment them, borrowing an expression from that wonderful Tree that was appointed to preserve man in the estate of Innocency in his perfection from all those weaknesses. Unto them of *Pergamus* Christ calls the rewards of Heaven, a white Stone, because that City being a place of Judicature, and the Residence of a Proconsul, they were acquainted with the manner of absolving the accused, which was by casting a white stone into a Pot; Christ thereby intimating the joyes of the Saints in Heaven much like unto those of a Criminal, when he received from his Judge a white stone of absolution instead of a black one of condemnation which he had deserved. Thus unto the Church of *Smyrna* for other reasons which we shall examine, he calls the glories of Heaven, a Crown of life. This last name signifies more than appears

Plinius

at the first aspect you may perceive the superficial part of the blessednesse and glories of Heaven. It will be worth your while to know their extraordinary value, that they may be also unto you an encouragement to Duty. Both our Saviours goodness that holds them out unto us, and offers them to our contemplation here, and to our fruition hereafter; and their own excellencies do invite us to enquire into them, that we may know what we have to expect from Gods liberality, and that accordingly we may order our endeavours. To the end you may meet with satisfaction in this inquisition, we shall labour to represent unto you the glorious estate of the Elect in Heaven with the same Colours that it appears in my Text: And first we shall see what is this Crown of life, and wherefore it is so called. Secondly, the Assurance that the Text gives of this Estate unto the faithful, which we shall prove as well by Reason, as the Authority of Scripture. But before we proceed, we shall make some few observations.

It were no ordinary Presumption to engage in a perfect description of this Crown of Life; when our weak capacities that are confined by our senses to this lower sphere, cannot at present ascend to a full contemplation of cœlestial bodies that enrich the Firmament, much less can we attain unto a clear apprehension of higher and more divine objects. Their superlative excellency frees them from the profanation and acquaintance of Judgements that converse onely amongst the meanest beings. An ancient Grecian petitioned the Heathen gods, that he might be admitted to behold the Sun at a near distance. It would be in vain to entertain the same curiosity in this case, and to desire to come now to a perfect knowledge of this supernatural condition, because whiles ignorance and prejudice do possess our Understandings, and vanity our Wills, we are neither worthy nor capable to receive such sublime notions. St. *Paul*'s modesty therefore becomes us who are not favoured with unspeakable Visions; He dares not venture to describe those mysteries that were reserved for his experience and sense: *That eye hath not*

Fide non capitur, spe non attingitur, charitate non apprehenditur; acquiri potest, æstimari non potest vita æterna. Szeged.

seen, ear hath not heard, and that are not entred into the heart of man. Yet we must not so far mistake the Apostles Practice, and our own Duty, as to make his discretion the cause of our negligence, and to forbid all meditations of Heaven as unlawful, because he recommends unto us sobriety in our inquiries, and as impossible because of its distance from our climate. This respectful ignorance is unseasonable in this unbelieving age: a friend unto Sensuality and Atheisme, and an enemy of those comforts which such considerations do yield to sweeten the bitterness of our earthly sorrows. Besides, this were to condemn Christs intention, and to frustrate his design. Wherefore doth he offer them to the contemplation of his Churches, and proposes them as the assured recompense of the labours of the faithful? Wherefore do the sacred Writers mention unto us so often the advantages of the other life? but that we should know, admire, and expect these Riches of Gods goodness; that we should endeavour to attain unto them, and that the hopes of immortal Bliss might make us bear temporal misfortunes, and the present unhappiness of the world with less repugnancy. Heb. 12. 2. It is the design of St. *Pauls* Exhortation, *Let us run*, saith he, *the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith: who for the joy that was set before him endured the Cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.* That we may follow this glorious example of our Saviour, and arrive at last at the same felicities, they are shewed unto us afar off: the distance as of all other objects that present themselves to our senses, lessens their greatness, and our present esteem of their worth; and those things that interpose between them and us, occasions this ingenuous Confession of the Apostle, *Now we see through a glass darkly, we know in part, and we profess in part.*

This imperfection proceeds partly from the weakness of Man's judgement, and partly from the sublimity and excellency of the possessions of Heaven; which are represented

ſented unto us by thoſe earthly things that have but a faint reſemblance with their qualities and nature. Beſides theſe advantages of the life to come are as many as glorious, and therefore it is impoſſible to find a perfect Relation, a perfect Image of the ſeveral parcels of Heavens Glory in any one excellency of the World. When they ſhould meet all in one Center, and joyn their diſperſed beams and powers, they would not be able to repreſent one of the Rayes of eternal felicity; and when ſuch a ſignificant word might be invented that could comprehend all the comforts, the bleſſedneſs, and all the pomp of the World; it would not be ſufficient to ſhew us the leaſt part of the happineſs of this life. Divers names are therefore borrowed from theſe earthly vanities to ſhadow thoſe realities, becauſe of ſome weak relation that they have with this bleſſed condition: Its Joyes are expreſſed by a Marriage, its Glory by the Sun and Stars, its Independency and Power by a Royalty, our Holineſs by the Prieſthood, our abode by a City fenced with Rubies and Diamonds, paved with Chryſtal and Saphyrs, and enriched with Gold and the moſt precious Stones. Amongſt the ſeveral Deſcriptions employed to give us a ſight of Heavenly Bliſs, I find none of ſo large an extent, and of ſuch an univerſal Comprehenſion as that in my text, *I will give thee a Crown of life.* In which words the ſweetneſs and pleaſures of that eſtate, the Glory, the Splendor, the Majeſty, and pomp of it do jointly appear together; for it is a life, a true life, full of all innocent delights that will render it both real and pleaſant, and that will free us from all Syncopes that do now frequently interrupt our life. Beſides it ſhall be a Crown of life, the glories will be anſwerable to the pleaſures of it: it ſhall be a living Crown, as ſome will have *Hebraiſm.* the words rendred: Thoſe excellent enjoyments that we ſhall poſſeſs, and that ſupream degree of honour unto which we ſhall be promoted ſignified by this Crown, ſhall continue with us for all eternity in the ſame unchangeable condition, therefore St. *Peter* calls it a Crown of Glory that *fadeth not away.* 1 Pet. 5. 4.

away. And St. *Paul* ἄφθαρτον. The Hebrew word used in
1 Cor. 9. 25. such like occasions, to express the sublimest felicity of Christ,
עטרת and of his Saints, signifies as well the plenty as the eternity
עטר of their advantages. We may hereby understand that this
He encompassed about. Crown of life shall intitle them to innumerable and immor-
Psal. 21. 3. tal satisfactions: it shall therefore be a true life. How wrongfully do we abuse this pleasant Title in bestowing it upon the present unworthy subsistency of the soul and body? O miserable estate! how vainly do we flatter our beings with this gratefull conceit? Can that ever be a life, that drags us continually to our Grave, that causeth us to die as soon as we begin to breathe, and that is joyned unto death by the inward Principles of our existence? Can that be a life that carries death in its bosome, that makes us sensible of a thousand deaths before we breathe forth the last gasp, and that is interrupted by sleep, idleness, and sickness, (as by so many deaths) which deprive us of the benefits of life, by which it is to be esteemed rather than by the continuance of the soul with the body, at least in the judgement of a wise Moralist, who hearing of a wicked man that was lately expired in a very old age; *Diu fuit*, said he, *sed non diu vixit.* At this rate how unworthy is our present subsistence of the pleasing and glorious title of life. This therefore is promised in my text in opposition to that which we now lead to express the excellency and reality of that Heavenly Life, free from those miseries which now do attend us: As if our Saviour should thus compare them together for the encouragement of the faithful. What if my interest doth expose you to your enemies cruelty? what if you are forced to lay down your lives in the maintenance of my cause? what reason have you to prize so inconsiderable a loss? when the *Exchange* brings unto you Returns of a more unspeakable value. Grudg not to part with this shadow of life; Grieve not to surrender it: Refuse it not when I shall require it: I have another life in reserve for you, whose advantages do as highly excel those of this present being, as the Crown doth the other

Tolerantia transitoria Corona æterna, pugna modica merces immensa, pœna levis gloria ineffabilis, dabo tibi post mortem pro morte vitæ æternitatem Aug. de civit. Dei.

other enjoyments of the body; a life both glorious and pleasant, where nothing shall be wanting to increase your satisfactions, but cares, trouble, and pain, which now do cause us to relish the sweetness of our earthly pleasures. *I will give thee*, &c. This expression presents us with the greatest variety of Excellencies. That they may better appear unto you, take a view of them, and of that supernatural estate of Heaven in these following propositions.

Erit status omnium bonorum aggregatione perfectus. Boetius de consol.

1. It shall be an unseparable union of the soul and body for all eternity. We shall live no more upon condition to die. The fear of death that doth usually torment us more than the sense, shall then cease with the cause: Men shall never be disquieted with those importune Apprehensions that disturb us, as they did *Belshazzar* in the midst of his carousing Cups, and that cause us to be weary of life as that Roman was, who being pursued by the cruelty of the Triumvirat, offered himself freely to his Enemies pleasure to be delivered by death of the daily fear of dying.

But then we shall be secure both from the sense and apprehension of death, and of all approaching evils; and we shall rest in that blessed Tranquility that shall never have cause to dread an alteration; there shall be no more divorce made between the soul and body, it shall not be possible to separate that most loving couple. Gods Wisdom and Power shall joyn them together in such a manner, that neither Time nor any Accident shall be able to cause a separation. For God, upon whose pleasure all his Creatures do depend, shall remove all deadly principles, and grant us an eternal continuance; which shall proceed not onely from his immutable Decree, and immediate influence, but also from the nature and manner of the union of the two parties, that shall no longer be entertained by the assistance of the Creatures, and a supply from the Elements; but onely by a greater correspondency, by more spiritual and more sutable Embraces. At present although the soul hath a natural tendency to enliven, to move and inform the body between them, there is

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a vaſt difference that can never conſent unto any conjunction without the mediation of the vital ſpirits extracted from the more ſubtil and purer ſubſtance of the meats refined by their ſucceſſive concoctions. But then our Bodies ſhall depoſe, and caſt off that groſs and earthly matter, and become more convenient companions of the ſoul by a nearer aſſimilation to that Celeſtial being; *For this mortal muſt put on immortality, and this corruptible muſt put on incorruption*, as St. Paul teaches at large in the *1 Cor. 15 Chap.* where he further declares the Myſtery of the Reſurrection, and of the eſtate of our bodies, in the 42, 43, 44 Verſes. *The body is ſown in corruption, it is raiſed in incorruption*; *it is ſown in diſhonour, it is raiſed in glory*; *it is ſown in weakneſs, it is raiſed in power*; *it is ſown a natural body, it is raiſed a ſpiritual body.* From hence we may diſcover the future ſubſtance of our Bodies, which ſhall be almoſt as ſubtil as thoſe earthly Spirits raiſed by the ordinary ſyſtole and diaſtole, the two motions of the heart, which Spirits have the neareſt acceſs to the ſoul of man, and by which it is tied to its preſent reſidence; for this bleſſed life and its eternity is eſtabliſhed upon a reſemblance and nearer relation between the ſoul and body, whoſe beings muſt be rendred more conformable before they can be ſecured from a diſſolution, or from the ſenſe of violence; becauſe that onely this conformity is able to render the communion unſeparable, and to free it by that means from the inſults and affronts of all enemies. It is therefore moſt certain that it ſhall not be in the power of any beings to put us to the ſufferance of pain; for as the pain which proceeds from the body is derived from an apprehenſion or a poſſibility of ſeparation from that being upon which it depends, or from that which tends unto it: As the pain of the ſoul doth from a ſeeming or a real ſeparation from God the fountain of all good, or from that which ſtands us in ſome manner inſtead of God: It cannot be imagined how they ſhall be able to ſuffer who are adorned with the qualities of immortality, whoſe beings are free from alteration, and not ſubject

Mercat. lib. 1. par. 4. claſ. 4. queſt. 120.

to the leaſt weakneſs, and whoſe ſenſes ſhall never receive any contrary impreſſions, nor convey unto the appetite any evil apprehenſions: Our bodies ſhall be no more marked with wounds and ſcars, nor feel the effects of the enemies cruelty and malice. What a glorious advantage is this? we ſhall be armed againſt the aſſaults of all caſualties: we ſhall be ſecure from all attempts: we ſhall no more tremble at the ſight of a danger: neither corruption within, nor injuries from without ſhall be able to alter that perfect and happy conſtitution of our beings: In one word, nothing ſhall ever interrupt or diſturb us in the ſweet enjoyment of heavenly Bliſs; *For God ſhall wipe away all tears from our eyes, and there ſhall be no more death, neither ſorrow, nor crying, nor ſhall there be any more pain: for the former things ſhall be paſſed away*: as is expreſly promiſed in *Revel.* 21. 4. For that reaſon this glorious Eſtate is called a Reſt, becauſe it ſhall free us from all inconveniences that now do encreaſe our labours: it ſhall not conſiſt in a ſhameful ceſſation from all action, but rather from thoſe troubleſome and ungrateful operations, unto which our mortal condition do now condemn us. Therefore it was typified under the Law by *Moſes* Sabbath, in which none were to be employed in ſervile work but were commanded to conſecrate that day in the ſervice of God: it was alſo ſignified by the ſtructure of the Tabernacle, in which ſome learned Rabbies do take notice, that Iron that is the emblem of War, affliction and trouble was not uſed, that being the viſible Type of this glorious Tabernacle of Heaven, where Gods preſence ſhall for ever dwell with his people: It intimates, that in this Immortal Sanctuary not made with hands, no Iron ſhall be mingled with the Gold and Jewels that enrich and adorn Gods Palace; no ſorrow, no ſickneſs, no diſturbance, nor diſpleaſure ſhall ever come near us; but as a Father very well expreſſeth himſelf: In Heaven there ſhall be a wonderful tranquility, a perfect ſecurity, and an eternal felicity.

Heb. 4. 9.

In gloria cæleſti mira ſerenitas perfecta ſecuritas æterna fœlicitas. Bernard. ſup. cant. Serm. 2, 12.

So I paſs to the next advantage of this Heavenly life, and

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that is, A perfect Independency, and a freedom from the Creature; a freedom from all those wants that do oblige us to crave assistance from inferiour beings; a freedom from the Elements, and their Authority, and from all obligations to mean subsistances; for this blessed life shall advance us to that perfection that we shall not stand in need of those things that we do now enjoy; we shall be enabled with those glorious qualities that shall make us be content in the enjoyment of our selves; and when something should be wanting to the accomplishment of our happiness which we shall not possess in our selves, as we shall be promoted to the fruition of God; we shall there find it in him; we shall there meet with all that sweetness and variety of Excellencies of which we see but the shadows in the Creature. *There we shall be abundantly filled with the fatness of his house: And we shall drink out of the rivers of his pleasures.* It is impossible that any thing should be ever wanting to them that shall be admitted to a perfect communion with God the Author and Creator of all things, to them who shall live under the daily expressions of his mercy and goodness: His Almighty Power inclinable to render them happy, shall continually supply and entertain them with immortal enjoyments, and furnish them with those things that are not to be expressed by the creature: The Greatness of Gods liberality doth make us conceive his Royal favours somewhat proportionable to his Infinite Being. *Alexander* could not give so little a summe to *Pericles* as 10 Talents: God will be no less noble to the Children of his bosome, to those that he is obliged to raise to the highest felicity. But those things that shall serve to encrease our satisfactions shall not be like those that we now possess: they shall not put us to any expence to obtain them, nor to any trouble to preserve them; they shall not weary and torment us as earthly riches do, nor oblige us to abase our selves; besides they shall have this other advantage, they shall proceed immediately from God: It is far more pleasant to drink of the Fountain, than to sup of the stream; it is a greater

Psal. 36. 8.

2 Cor. 12. 4.

greater ſatisfaction to behold the Sun, than to feel ſome indirect reflections of the beams: O how pleaſant, and what an Angelical ſatisfaction will it be to continue for ever in the loving embraces of that gracious God from whom all good is derived? What advantage will it be that we ſhall there reliſh true pleaſures without the leaſt mixture of evil? for they ſhall immediately flow unto us from Gods Eſſence, from an eternal contemplation of his face, and an immediate enjoyment of his favour: we ſhall receive from Gods hand what he conveys unto us by other beings, and that in a greater abundance, and with far more ſatisfaction: for our bleſſings are not ſo natural when they come from the fruitfulneſs of the Earth, and the influences of the Heavens, as when they proceed from a divine Bounty without any mediation. How ſweet therefore will our Heavenly comforts appear unto us, when God out of the tenderneſs of his Love ſhall freely beſtow them? when in this Celeſtial Court every one ſhall have an equal acceſs to the ſupream Authority, and depend onely upon God both for our ſubſiſtance, and for thoſe ineffable things that will contribute to our happineſs; A bleſſed Society, a glorious Abode, Holy and pleaſant Employs, the benefits of an eternal Peace, with ineſtimable Riches, ſhall be appurtenances of this Crown of life, but the ſatisfaction that will flow from thence, ſhall be ſwallowed up in that Ocean of Joy which Gods immediate preſence and glory will create in our ſouls, that will become ſo many Heavens, where the inviſible Being will manifeſt himſelf in an extraordinary manner. Therefore St. *John* promiſeth, *God will dwell with us, and we ſhall be his people, and God himſelf ſhall be with us, and be our God.* And elſewhere, *He that overcometh ſhall inherit all things, and I will be his God, and he ſhall be my Son.* Rev. 21. 3.

Beſides I find this other advantage in an immediate ſupply of our wants from God, That we ſhall thereby be freed from that ſlavery that increaſes at preſent our diſcontents: It is no ſmall diſgrace to the Nobility of our Nature, that we ſhould ſo impatiently purſue after, and ſo covetouſly embrace the

vanities of the world, and things meaner than our ſelves; it gives alſo no little occaſion of diſturbance to be obliged to labour after the poſſeſſion of that which can furnish us no real content, and that rewards our expectation and deſires with diſappointment. But then as we shall immediately receive from Gods overflowing abundance, innumerable ſatisfactions, we shall no longer diſcredit our ſelves by mean complacencies, and by the diſcovery of our natural weakneſs and neceſſities; we shall no longer weary our ſelves in the purſuance of things unable to ſatisfie us with content: Upon God we shall depend, in his favour we shall be ſatisfied, and by his happineſs we shall be happy; not as we are at preſent, for the happineſs of the world is increaſed as much by our wants, as by our enjoyments; but then as the conſtitution of our beings, and our eſtates shall be altered, we shall no longer know pleaſure and felicity by their contraries: in God we shall meet with the true and genuine taſte of all Excellencies without the leaſt mixture of evill. Unto this glorious dependency upon God, which St. *Paul* ſtyles, *A freedom from the bondage of corruption, and the liberty of the Saints.* God labours at preſent to bring and train us up, by weaning our affections from the world, and by inſpiring nobler deſires, that are not to be concerned for the poſſeſſions of this life. It is the drift of St. *Pauls* Exhortation, who wills us *To be indifferent in the uſe of the creatures, and not to abuſe our ſelves, or them by any fond Embraces, or impatient wiſhes for that which is to ſubſiſt but for a moment.* It is the concern of us all that aſpire to this independency, not to fix our hearts, nor our happineſs upon the world, but to be always ready to part with that which is but an impediment to our perfection and felicity; for that reaſon God exerciſes us with wants and afflictions, and prepares us for a Crown, as *Philip* of *Macedo* did *Alexander* his ſon, by actions and employments ſuitable to the Majeſty that we are one day to repreſent, and to the Excellency of that eſtate unto which we ſhall be promoted.

Rom. 8. 21.

1 Cor. 7. 30.

3. This

3. This glorious dependency upon God, that shall free us from all dependency upon the creature, shall proceed from an inward and perfect communion and unſpeakable union with this ſupream Being; we ſhall be united unto him by our affections; Gods love ſhall be no more clouded with judgments and trials; it ſhall ſhine upon us without interruption; our love in requital ſhall return him continual expreſſions of thankfulneſs; our deſires ſhall reſt in his ſufficiency: all the motions of our ſoul ſhall tend to his Glory: We ſhall alſo be united unto God as the members are united unto the Head, by an inward and continual infuſion of his divine Spirit in our ſouls, and by an humble ſubmiſſion to the motions of divine Wiſdom that ſhall govern us; or as the ſubjects are one with their Prince, ſo God ſhall be one with us; he ſhall reaſſume the ſupream Authority which he exerciſeth at preſent by a Mediator, and ſhall appear as our ſoveraign Lord, whoſe glory will be our intereſt; we ſhall alſo be united unto God by ſuch a manner as is not to be expreſſed. Such will be this union as ſhall promote us to an inward ſight of God, to a perfect reſemblance with him, and to an eternal familiarity with God the Father; ſuch will be this union, that we ſhall enjoy with the Incomprehenſible Being the ſame felicity, and be ſwallowed up in the immenſity of his glory, *Rev.* 21. 11. This union is ſignified unto us by a marriage, becauſe Chriſt conſidered there not only as a Mediator, but as God, ſhall enter into a ſtricter alliance with men, and ſhall become one with them in an unſpeakable manner. Therefore St. *Paul* ſtyles it a great myſtery. At preſent we are united unto God by the Holy Ghoſt, that is called the Spirit of Chriſt, by the reception of his benefits in the Sacraments, and by Prayer that cauſeth a continual entercourſe and correſpondency to be entertained between God and our ſouls: But then theſe imperfect unions ſhall ceaſe, and give place to a more perfect and glorious, to a limited participation of all the divine Attributes that are communicable, to ſuch a union, as ſhall raiſe us above all natural capacities,

1 Cor. 15. 28.

Joh. 17. 24.

Admirald. de vita æterna.

Rev. 21. 9.

Epheſ. 5. 32.

Epheſ. 3. 19.

πᾶν, τὸ πλήρωμα τῆ θεότ. *Vide coloss. 1. 19. de Christo.*

ties, our divine Estate unto which God designs us! By the present we may judge of the future: What means our gracious God to bestow that cost, to employ those glorious Agents in our present satisfaction, if he intended not to bring us to a condition suitable to these hopeful beginnings? What means the Father to sacrifice his onely begotten Son, to expose him to all the affronts that nature is able to receive? What means he to send the Holy Spirit to enrich us with his most precious and divine Graces? Is it onely to restore our natures to their Primitive Integrity, that needed not the concurrency of such a Saviour, nor the expressions of so great a Love? or is it onely to fit us for an entrance into the Angelical Hierarchies? They would not have been so inquisitive into that estate which they would have then understood; and the Sacred Trinity had never been employed in such a manner in mans Redemption, nor had never honoured him with those unspeakable testimonies of divine love, if God had not intended him for an estate near unto himself. The holy Angels had never been ministring Spirits unto us, unless we had been the adopted sons of God, and unless there had been something in us that is to be worthy of their services and labours which God designs for his eternal enjoyment: Wherefore is it also that our nature is advanced to an Hypostatical union with the divine Word? is it onely to enable Christ for the office of a Mediator? or is it not also to declare unto what honour God would promote the rest of mankind, were they as he is, free from error and vice? Wherefore do we labour to bring our lives and affections to a conformity with Christ, but that we that are his brethren might enjoy in some measure that advantage which he possesseth before us, and be united unto God, if not in the same unseparable manner, yet in such as may have some relation with that; witness Christs Words in his Prayer to God at the eve of his Passion, *I pray for them that they all may be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them, that they may*

John 7. 21, 22, 23.

be

be one even as we are one, I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one. Unity is the perfection, as well as foundation of number; all things have a natural tendency to it in the world: Therefore the Church of Christ of several Nations, being called to a participation of the rules of his goodness; they must first as the Rivers that run into the O- 1 Cor. 15. 28.
cean unite with God the ocean of all good, before they can come to the enjoyment of those endless joyes and pleasures that are onely there to be found. Other Reasons and passages of Scripture may be alledged for this Truth, which makes St. *Paul* fly out into an Admiration, and St. *John* breathe forth nothing but wishes; all the holy Martyrs embrace and hug the Flames that did convey them into this estate. Was it not sufficient, O blessed God, that thou shouldest deliver man from his deserved punishment? was it not sufficient that thou shouldest render him capable of thy favours? But must such a favour be granted? must thou admit him to a participation of the divine Nature by this unspeakable Union? *O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom* St. Peter.
and goodness of our God! You know not mortal men what God hath reserved for them that fear him! What may we not expect from his love when we shall come to this estate? If there be any good at Gods disposal, any sweetness, any pleasure and benefit in heaven or in earth, it shall be theirs, and in their possession, unto whom he hath at present given Rom. 8. 32.
his Son and Spirit, and will also give himself, as St. *Paul* tells us.

Besides, this Union shall cause an interrupted Communion between God and our souls. God shall pour his blessings upon us in abundance, and we shall render unto him unfeigned testimonies of thankfulness; We shall spend Eternity in his praises, and he shall spend his Treasuries upon us; we shall think of nothing but how to glorifie him, and he shall strive to satisfie us: we shall contend in mutual offices of Love and Friendship. O happy contention! O blessed communion! unto which our present Piety and Religion intends

intends to bring us. We have now a communion with God in holy duties, and by his divine Spirit, for no other end but that we might thereby be prepared for his eternal communion in Heaven.

In this Union and Communion with God, consists the chief happiness of the creature; for besides that they shall remove from us whatsoever looks like an evil, they shall procure unto us advantages suitable unto that supernatural honour and estate, *Which eye hath not seen*, &c. Our present knowledge shall be changed into sight; our hope into fruition; our love to God into endless transports; our desires shall be satisfied, our Prayers granted and turned into eternal Allelujahs; our understandings shall be no more darkened with ignorance; our wills no more corrupted with vice; a blessed perfection shall reign within us: And this shall proceed from an immediate infusion of divine Knowledge, and a communication of spiritual qualities; that shall fit us for the vision of God, for we shall see his Face, and his Name shall be in our foreheads. *We know*, saith St. *John*, *when God shall appear, we shall be like him:* For we shall see him as he is; not only with our corporal eyes we may see that inaccessible light which always accompanies the visible declaration of his Glory and Power; but also with the eyes of our souls we shall behold as much of the essence of God as the creature can perceive he will expose himself to our view: And therefore we shall be transformed into his resemblance; we shall be as so many Images of the Godhead, so many living Pictures of his Infinite Being, representing his glorious perfections as a clear fountain doth the body of the Sun, or rather as *Moses* face did the brightness of the beams with which the Divine Majesty was cloathed upon the Mount *Sina*; God will imprint in us the noble Characters and lineaments of his Essence: therefore well might *David* promise to himself, *As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness, I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness.* So that this blessed life shall not so much consist in the union of the soul and body, as

Isa. 64.4.

Revel. 22.

in

in the union of both ſoul and body with God our Creator.

In the next place, in this life there ſhall be an excellent order and ſubordination in our ſouls; all the paſſions and affections ſhall be ruled by the command of our Reaſon: Theſe inward motions ſhall not ceaſe, but they ſhall be bound to their good behaviour; they ſhall no more offer to raiſe a rebellion within us to diſturb our tranquility; they ſhall not be capable of evil impreſſions, nor bear the marks Iſa. 38. 18. of corrupted nature: There ſhall be a beautiful ſymmetry between the parts of our ſoul and body, inſomuch that perfection and integrity ſhall appear within and without. How happy ſhall that life be when we ſhall perfectly enjoy our ſelves! when all our affections ſhall endeavour to accomplish our felicity! Theſe are our preſent enemies; they procure all the inconveniences that happen unto us, whether in our bodies or eſtates, by perſwading us to embrace that ſeeming good, which proves our deadly poyſon. But then they ſhall be no more corrupted by the ſight of apparant advantages, nor tempted to betray our intereſt for a vain enjoyment: they ſhall always carry us to the performance of Duty, and to that real good which ſhall fully ſatisfie us with content. Unleſs they be thus reformed, it is not poſſible for man to taſte happineſs in the moſt bleſſed Eſtate: For what are Honours, Riches, and the greateſt Bleſſings, to one tormented with the deſire of an increaſe, or to a peevish diſcontented ſoul that apprehends a change, or ſees a happineſs afar off which it prefers to the preſent, or to one whoſe paſſions gaul him: The leaſt pain is ſufficient to qualifie the greateſt pleaſures: therefore in this happy life unruly paſſions ſhall ceaſe with outward inconveniences: they ſhall ſuffer us to relish the ſweetneſs of our poſſeſſions; they ſhall rather awaken our ſenſes, and give them a fuller and a quicker apprehenſion of the excellency of the heavenly delights: and although our happineſs ſhall not be confined to thoſe pleaſures that are furniſhed by our ſenſes, for they are not ſufficient inlets to receive as much as the ſoul requires to accomplish her felicity; be-

ſides, it is not proper that the Bliſs of ſo excellent a part ſhould depend upon its correſpondency with the baſer, or that it ſhould borrow its ſatisfaction from its union with the body; yet it is moſt certain, that they ſhall not want a share of thoſe pleaſures in which the ſoul ſhall ſo freely ſwim; they ſhall not be brutish, or ſuch as *Mahomet* promiſeth to his Muſulmans, but they ſhall be ſutable unto the ſpiritual body of the Righteous, and far excelling the baſe and rotten pleaſures of this miſerable life, in quality, for they ſhall be without the leaſt mixture of bitterneſs in the quantity; for they ſhall be proportion'd to our capacities, and in the durance; for they ſhall be continual without interruption, and eternal, as *David* informs us, ſpeaking unto God. *In thy preſence is fulneſs of joy, and at thy right hand are pleaſures for evermore.*

Caro ſpiritualis effecta per omnes ſenſus ſuos multimodis exuberabit deliciis. Laur.

Pſal. 16. 11.

5. This life ſhall be a life of Holineſs and Righteouſneſs; a life of Piety and Juſtice, and of ſobriety, a life of integrity; for then we ſhall be arrived to the ſupreme degree of perfection, as well as of happines; we ſhall come to that perfect ſtature of regeneration which is in Chriſt Jeſus our Lord: The works of the Devil ſhall then be utterly deſtroyed, and that great diſorder which his Apoſtacy hath cauſed ſhall then be reformed. In Heaven no impure thing ſhall enter, *For without holineſs none ſhall ſee God.* The glorified ſhall never be able to offend their God, for the inward motions of the ſoul being rightly diſpoſed, according to his Will, and our affections perfectly reformed, the outward actions of the body muſt needs be conformable. When there ſhould be another Serpent to tempt us, and another *Eve* to aſsiſt him, they could never prevail upon us, becauſe we ſhall be no more in a poſsibility of ſinning, for our underſtandings ſhall be no more capable of miſtakes, nor our wills corrupted with importune deſires, nor our actions forced from us againſt our election; And beſides this bleſſed diſpoſition from whence ſhall proceed a conſtant practice of the Commandments of God, he will alſo by his continual influence

Rev. 21. Heb. 12. 14.

fluence to ſtrengthen our reſolutions, and determine our wills, that they ſhall abhor whatever might diſpleaſe him; the ſight of his holineſs ſhall convey the ſame diſpoſition into our minds, as St. *John* tells us: and his infinite power ſhall be engaged to preſerve them whom his love hath eſpouſed, and for whom he hath been at ſo vaſt an expence to raiſe them to that eſtate; Therefore God we ſhall for ever adore with all the powers of the ſoul and body; his ſervice we ſhall attend with delight, our brethren we ſhall love without diſſimulation. How pleaſant will this life be when there ſhall be a continual Emulation between God and his creatures, and between themſelves, who ſhall exceed in love and affection? when all the glorified in Heaven ſhall interchange daily expreſſions of kindneſs; when there ſhall be a perfect agreement, a living correſpondency, a ſweet fellowſhip, a delightful converſation, without envy or malice, without care or tediouſneſs. This is ſufficient to render us moſt happy, when all other things ſhould be wanting, for happineſs conſiſts rather in a perfect diſpoſition of the mind, than in a plentiful enjoyment of outward advantages. But beſides, our bodies ſhall be adorned with heavenly qualities; the preſent ſhall ſee a moſt happy change with the viſible ſubſtance, and other qualities ſhall be added with which we are not at preſent acquainted: It is therefore needleſs to queſtion whether we ſhall know one another, ſeeing we ſhall ſcarce know our ſelves, the change will be ſo great: It is certain that we ſhall move without trouble, we ſhall aſcend without help; our ſtrength ſhall be encreaſed; our deformities removed; our infirmities depoſed; our appearance ſhall be full of majeſty and glory: as *Daniel* informs us; *They that be wiſe ſhall ſhine as the brightneſs of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteouſneſs as the ſtars for ever and ever.* In which words you may further obſerve a difference in the glories of Heaven ſutable to their inclinations and employments on earth; for the one ſhall ſhine as the Firmament, the other as the Stars: a ſenſible diſtinction ſhall be both in the nature, and the greatneſs

Conveniens eſt ut ſicut damnati habent extremas tenebras ita beati habeant extremam lucem. Baſil. lib. Hexa. *Caro ſine molo & pondere ſi ita ut ſit animæ ornamentum non tormentum* Aug. Serm. 139. *de tempor.* c. 3.

greatness of their Rewards; for according to the several dispositions of men, and their several capacities; God will accordingly bestow upon them his riches, and his glory: Therefore a Father adviseth us to enlarge our perfections, and the faculties of the soul by a continual exercise in humane sciences, that they may be then more capable to receive and contain the mysteries of Gods Wisdom, and better able to bring forth glorious actions for this eternal Sabbath is an estate where all our abilities shall be in the highest perfection; where we shall act and move without the least inconveniency: Occasions we may have to exercise our Vertues, not such as will cause us to suffer, but such as without that strength of nature we should find a default in our happiness. It is therefore our wisdom now to accustom our selves to that which shall be our employment for ever, and upon which shall depend our satisfaction and glory; which shall be revealed in us, as
Rom. 18.18. St. *Paul* informs us; *In our souls by a perfect enjoyment of supernatural excellencies; in our bodies, that shall be free from all weakness, and beautified with glorious qualities.* Therefore this estate is called a Crown of Life; for as the Crown is of a round and a perfect figure, it is most proper to express the infiniteness and perfection of those heavenly delights that shall accompany that life: besides, the Crown is the sacred emblem of joy and honour; this expression therefore presents us with the notion of the most pleasant, and the most honourable estate together; for there is nothing more acceptable than life, nor more glorious than a Crown: and that we may better understand wherefore Christ promiseth Heaven under this notion, we must take notice that chiefly four sorts of persons were dignified with a Crown amongst the Ancients: Kings to express their Authority and supream Command: A new married couple at the nuptial Feasts therefore by the Greeks they were called βασιλεὺς and βασίλιοσα. The Priest in the solemn Sacrifices, to render the offering more acceptable, and the devotion more glorious, or rather to shew what qualification was anciently required

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in one that presented to the Divinity the Homages of the people; Another sort were crowned, they who had given open testimony of their valour and cunning, either in private Disputes, and Plays allowed by authority, or in a publick War, in the maintenance of the general interest: To these several sorts of Crowns were given, which were in value and esteem according to the nature of the vertuous action. Now the faithful in Heaven shall be Kings, enjoying a supream command over the infernal Spirits and damned Souls. *They shall be Priests, sending up unto God the perfume of their praises,* They shall be married unto Christ in love and affection. In these several respects this Crown may become them. But our Saviour in this promise hath more especially an eye to the Crowns that were the rewards of a generous Perseverance; that had obtained the Victory; for he mentions the difficulties that were to be overcome; A death to be endured; and adds this encouragement, *I will give thee O faithful soul, a Crown of Life.* Rev. 2. 26.

It was the ancient custom to crown the Temples of the dead Bodies when their lives had been exemplary: by this ceremony the Heathens did express a Reward that was due to a vertuous life, and the Honour which a righteous Soul hath purchased to himself: What they performed to the Body, Christ promiseth to do unto both Soul and Body: *I will give thee,* &c. *Plin.*

You have seen the Picture of this Crown with many Jewels of the greater bulk; an infinite number of the lesser sort of Pearls and Flowers we shall never know but by experience: And so I proceed to a brief consideration of the Assurance that my Text gives of this Estate unto the faithful: *I will give thee,* &c.

It is no wonder to see *Julian* the Apostate a professed enemy of Christ, a promoter of Gentilism, upbraid Christians with the easiness of their belief, and scoff at this perswasion, *That there is a Crown of Glory to reward the Righteous.* It is no marvel if amongst the Heathens, men nursed up with pre-

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judices againſt the Truth, ignorant of the power and goodneſs of our God, ſhould call in queſtion the Articles of the Reſurrection of the dead, and of the happineſs of another life; but that in the boſom of Chriſtianity, under the moſt viſible expreſſions of Gods Omnipotency, Juſtice and Mercy; there ſhould be ſome of that dull apprehenſion as not to underſtand, and of thoſe ſtrange principles, as to oppoſe theſe ſacred and beneficial Truths, it may ſeem at firſt very ſtrange. But ſee what manner of men are capable of this folly amongſt us, and you will ceaſe from admiring; they are the Diſciples of *Diagoras* and *Epicurus* rather than of Chriſt, men that are degenerated into beaſts by their condeſcention to bruitish pleaſures, whoſe ſouls are ſunk into their ſenſes, and have loſt both the uſe and knowledge of the nobleſt functions; they are thoſe that defie Heaven by their crimes, whoſe lives are a ſcandal, and their perſons a reproach to the ſociety: And do you wonder wherefore they are enemies to theſe truths, that are no friends to the peaceable enjoyment of their luſts, that lay before their eyes the punishments that are reſerved for them? do you wonder if theſe graceleſs wits cannot comprehend an eſtate ſo far above their capacities, and contrary to the preſent: let their natural abilities be never ſo great; ſuch know no other life but that of the ſenſes, no other felicity but the carnal, nor other delights but of the body; and how is it poſſible that ſuch ſhould
1 Cor. 2. 14. have the leaſt apprehenſion of that ſupernatural condition that ſhall raiſe man and all his faculties to the higheſt perfection of activity. It is a myſtery but onely to them whoſe minds are inlightned by the Spirit of God; they alſo have no clear inſight into this eſtate: Therefore Chriſt in my Text pities the weakneſs of our capacities, and adds to his promiſe of heavens glories ſufficient reaſons to convince us of the reality of theſe Rewards: They are contained in theſe Particulars. 1. In the Qualities of the perſon that promiſeth, and his engagement; 2. In the nature of the Recompence, or in that excellent relation between the eſtate of the

faithful

faithful on earth, and that in Heaven: other reaſons ſhall be added, drawn from the rules obſerved in the diſpoſition of the Creatures. The perſon that promiſeth this Crown of Life, is deſcribed in the 8th verſe of this Chapter; *The firſt and the laſt, which was dead, and is alive.* By which words is intimated his ſufficiency for the performance: for thereby are ſignified his Divinity and Humanity, his death, by which he purchaſed this celeſtial Diadem for us; his Almighty Power, and his Truth, that are engaged to ſee us in the poſſeſſion of it.

1. Chriſts Death hath given us an unqueſtionable Right to this Crown, and to all its dependencies: Before in the eſtate of Innocency we had a natural claim to Heaven, by reaſon of our ſoul that is an immaterial ſubſtance conformable to the celeſtial Beings: ſo that by this law of Nature eſtabliſhed in the Creation, which aſſignes unto every thing a final reſidence where firſt it had its derivation: if man had continued in his integrity, he had always continued in that glorious Right, and might have called for an entrance into that Seat of Glory and happineſs: But this natural Priviledge hath been forfeited by Rebellion. The ſoul by ſin hath loſt together the Title to demand, and the Power to deſerve an admiſſion; and hath ſeen it ſelf baniſhed out of Heaven by the procurement of its two great adverſaries Guilt and Corruption. But Chriſt by his death hath overcome them, and all impediments; by his Blood he hath ſatisfied an offended Juſtice, and *obtained for us an eternal redemption.* Therefore he is ſaid to be *a propitiation for us, and our peace, by whom we have an acceſs to the Father.* And in 10 *Heb.* 19, 20. St. *Paul* teacheth, *We have boldneſs to enter in to the Holieſt by the blood of Jeſus, by a new and living way, which he hath conſecrated for us through the vail,* that is to ſay, *his fleſh.* But the Infinite merits of our Redeemer have not onely re-eſtabliſhed us in our former Right, but purchaſed for us a degree of Perfection and Honour, far above that unto which we might have aſcended by the ſtrength of Nature in the eſtate of Innocency, according

In cælumque redire animas cælumq; venire. Manil. lib. 4.

Heb. 9. 12, 14

Rom. 3. 25.

Eph. 2.

Aug. lib. 12. de Civit.

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ing to the judgement of the Fathers, and of St. *Paul*, who in *Rom.* 5. therefore mentions many advantages which we have received by Christ, for one lost by *Adam*, and tells us, that the blood of the former is far more effectual and beneficial unto us than the transgression of the latter hath been hurtful: So that by this means, Gods eternal Justice is engaged to bring us to this estate which hath been lawfully purchased for us: In order thereunto *Christ hath transported our nature, and introduced it into the highest heavens, that it might take possession in our names of Immortality and Bliss.*

Heb. 9. 24.

Eph. 2. 6.

2. But the goodness of our Title to Heaven, into which Christ is entred, had not been sufficient to secure us the fruition, unless he had been enabled with a power sutable to so great an undertaking: therefore we are informed, *That all power is given to him in heaven and in earth. That God hath put all things under his feet; That he sits at the right hand of God with the Scepter of an Almighty power in his hand.* This is signified in the former description, by being *alive from the dead*, an infallible testimony of the Divinity of our Saviour. As many difficulties, I confess, will strive to hinder our entrance into Heaven, as there were nations that did oppose the Israelites passage into the promised Land; our selves and Affections are not the least. But what cannot he overcome, by whom all things were created in Heaven and in Earth, visible and invisible, *&c. who doth according to his will in the Army of Heaven, and amongst the Inhabitants of the Earth, and none can stay his hand, or say unto him what dost thou.* What difficulties will be able to frustrate his design, unto whom the Elements, the dumb Creatures, the Devils, and all things do yield obedience, who hath conquered Death in its own Territories; who hath an Infinite Wisdom, as well as Power, to bring to pass his intentions: So that what Christ promiseth, he is fully able to perform.

Rom. 1. 4.

Dan. 4. 35.

3. Christ is Truth it self; he is not subject to change, nor able to deceive us: He is not as *Xerxes* was, he crowned his Steers man in the morning, and beheaded him in the evening.

evening. He is not thus inconstant in his Affections and Promises. *The heaven and the earth shall pass, but one jot of his word shall not pass until all be fulfilled.* Seeing therefore that he hath promised to bestow this Crown of life upon every faithful soul, he will preserve them here by his spirit, he will convey and guard them at their separation from the Body, by the ministry of his Angels, and will at last receive them unto this glorious estate. Here are sufficient securities for this Immortal Reward; Gods almighty Power, his eternal Justice, his Infinite Goodness and Love, and his unchangeable Truth, are all engaged to see the faithful crowned with Glory; so that it is as impossible that they should fail of their expectation, as it is impossible that God should deny himself. St. *Pauls* Perswasion, *Jobs* Confidence, and the Assurance of the holy men, were grounded upon this infallible foundation. Were we possessed with the same spirit, we should not need to seek for any other confirmation of this Truth than the authority of Scripture, that often repeats the promise of this Crown unto the faithful. But this sensual age will scarce do God that justice, to give credit to his Word, as if he could have a design to deceive us, whose glory is our happiness and perfection; as if he were an enemy to our good, who gives us whatever we enjoy; as if there were danger to expect the Rewards of Honesty and Vertue, and to yield obedience when both Duty and Interest do require it: Consider the folly of our Modern Wits; extraordinary advantages are promised unto men to oblige them to actions full of honour and satisfaction, when there should be no such future advantages; it is their present concern to entertain this perswasion, because it is a friend to Piety, and it tends to strengthen their resolutions, to appease their discontents, and to fill our souls with a glorious expectation: He that *Athenian*, that Matth. 5.

that in his greateſt poverty, did feel the contentments of the wealthieſt Citizens; Men ſhould labour to comfort themſelves in their preſent miſeries, with the aſſurance of a more bleſſed eſtate, and ſuffer their hopes to fruſtrate the deſign of worldly misfortunes. It ſeems therefore ſtrange, that Rational Beings ſhould be ſo great enemies of their good, as to diſcredit this beneficial perſwaſion, and willingly to deprive themſelves of an Antidote able to fortifie their ſouls againſt the venom of evil. The excellency of that eſtate, the vileneſs of ours, and our natural unworthineſs, may juſtly fill us with wonder and admiration. But we are not to queſtion this Truth, when not onely Scipture but Reaſon alſo is able to convince us that it is certain, according to the natural courſe of things, that he that is faithful unto Chriſt, muſt needs attain unto the greateſt happineſs. I underſtand the word *faithful* in the largeſt acception for a *vertuous man*; faithful in the management of the ſeveral intereſts with which God hath intruſted him; for one whoſe life and profeſſion is conformable to Chriſtianity; who labours to reduce his Paſſions to reaſon; his deſires to content, his wants to ſufficiency, and that endeavours to ſtrengthen himſelf with all the natural and revealed perſwaſions that are intended to aſſiſt our Vertue againſt the inconveniencies that aſſault us. Such a one hath a degree of happineſs begun in him, and if he continues, exerciſe will bring him to that perfect diſpoſition of the mind, and to that noble temper as may brave all the attempts of evil. The *Stoicks*, by the ſtrength of nature, did attain unto a ſeeming inſenſibility, witneſs the reſolution of *Poſſidonius*, in the midſt of the tortures of the Gout, he could never be forced to confeſs it to be a pain: witneſs *Anaximander*, pounded in a morter, he laughed at the folly and cruelty of the Tyrant. How much more power ſhall

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man have over himſelf, when his reſolution is backt by ſuch ſtrong perſwaſions as Chriſtianity teaches, when ſuch divine helps do aſſiſt him, as the graces of the holy Ghoſt, an invincible hope, and a well-grounded faith, that makes him rejoyce in tribulation. It is therefore plain, that he that practiſes the Rules of Chriſtianity, muſt needs be happy, not onely in regard of himſelf, that he renders thereby capable of happineſs, but alſo in regard of thoſe with whom we have a communication, that are invited by an amiable correſpondency, and good offices to the ſame returns and behaviour; and in reſpect of God, who cannot but vouchſafe his bleſſings and his favour to that Being that is inſpired with ſo noble an ambition, and that in obedience to his holy Laws labours to arrive to perfection and holineſs. But beſides this reaſon which onely proves a natural happineſs attainable by a vertuous Chriſtian in this life, we may meet with others in that great proportion or relation between the eſtates of the faithful on earth and of the Saints in heaven. Caſt your eyes upon both, and tell me, what hinders a ſoul waſhed in the blood of Chriſt, adopted amongſt the ſons of God, united unto him by his divine Spirit; what hinders a ſoul full of heavenly affections, a ſoul that bears the Image of God, from an immediate fruition of his preſence and favour? If therefore that be granted that may be proved by the experience of the faithful as well as by the authority of Scripture; that they do really enjoy a preſent correſpondency with their Creator, and that they do not in vain flatter themſelves with the conceits of an extraordinary poſſeſſion, of the graces of the divine Spirit, becauſe they feel the inward operation of this ſpirit in their ſouls, and ſee a notable change in their diſpoſitions and affections wrought in them by his power alone, that faſhions us in the womb; if this be granted with the other

Unius Sp. Sancti opus eſt regeneratio. Ambroſ. de Sacr.

other priviledges of the Elect, we ſhall find no difficulty to believe the happy conſequences that do naturally flow from thence; that God that favours them with ſuch powerful helps, in order to their perfection, muſt needs deſign them for a greater happineſs than their preſent mortality and weakneſs are capable of: That he would never be at ſuch vaſt expence and care as to provide us with ſuch divine qualities onely for this tranſitory Being, were our ſouls to be ſmother'd in our graves; that this bleſſed change that appears in our ſouls and bodies, and that raiſes us to a capacity of being happy, and to a reſemblance with God, tends to prepare us for a more worthy communion with him; and that otherwiſe he would never have honoured us with ſuch ſpecial tokens of his Love, nor given us by them an expectation of greater advantages. This proceeding were not conſiſtent with the Wiſdom, Power, Goodneſs, Veracity and Immutability of God, to receive us into his intimate acquaintance, to beſtow upon us the unſpeakable mercies that are ſuitable to it to make us expect future happineſs, and the eternal fruition of his preſence in Glory, and then to ſuffer us to be cut off by death without hopes of life; ſo that beſides that the condition of the Elect on Earth, and their preſent ſanctification have a neceſſary tendency to glorification, God would never have undertaken to render us happy, did he not really reſolve to make us ſo.

But ſet aſide theſe conſiderations, and look upon a true Chriſtian as he appears to the eyes of the world: You ſhall find his deſcription given by a Heathen Philoſopher to a Roman Emperour to this purpoſe; He deſpiſes the World and all its enjoyments, he ſticks cloſe to his Profeſſion, maugre all his enemies; he rejoyces in Wants and Perſecutions, and ſings merrily in the flames; his ſoul is full of hopes, and they ſtrengthen him againſt

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all preſent evils. What is therefore able to diſturb the happineſs of ſuch a ſoul that is raviſhed with its own enjoyments, and that contemns now all things elſe? what hinders the ſame power that hath freed the faithfull from the ſlavery of ſin and the world, and made us able to contemn the miſeries of our preſent condition, to free alſo the body from all ſubjection to the Elements? When therefore I ſee a Chriſtian ſo far advanced in the Race of Perfection as to leave in a little time the reſt of the world at ſuch a vaſt diſtance behind, I muſt needs conclude that he will make a conſiderable progreſs if he continues his courſe: Or when I behold a Painter chalk out to the life a fair face, I do eaſily judge that his pencil will be able to add many graces, and compleat it. Thus when I ſee the firſt Eſſayes of a Chriſtian to be ſo glorious in this life, I am forced to conclude that the end of his work will be far more in the other. If *Paul* and *Silas*, in their Chains, can ſing for joy; St. *Peter* ſleep ſecure with pleaſure at the Eve of the day intended for his Execution, and all the holy men meet with happineſs and content in the moſt ſenſible Penury, and the ſharpeſt Afflictions; How much more happy and content ſhall they be in that Life, that ſhall not be ſubject to want, to diſgrace and inconveniency; in that Life where all things ſhall be as perfect and glorious as themſelves; when therefore Chriſt ſhould never have promiſed this eſtate unto the faithful, he that is ſenſible of their preſent condition, and of the honour and perfection unto which they have been advanced, he may juſtly conceive that they will arrive to an eſtate ſuitable to theſe promiſing beginnings. In the next place, if we caſt an eye upon the natural order which is obſerved in the diſpoſition of the Creatures, we ſhall find ſufficient Reaſons to be perſwaded of this Truth.

Juſti afflictionem requiem putant. Lact. lib. 8. mor.

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All the Beings in the world do generally attain unto those Ends unto which their Creation did design them. And shall man only be excepted? Shall not he arrive to his glorious end, to happiness? for which he was created, as may appear by his endeavours and desires to obtain it, and by the constitution of his Being? Shall not he attain unto this estate when the union of the soul and body seems to promise it to him, in case he renders not himself incapable of it? Shall not he come to the fruition of God in whom onely his happiness dwells? Is it possible that the power and wisdom that appears so wonderfull in his composition, and that declares a particular esteem of him by an over-ruling Providence, should onely design him for a world of misery, and then tumble him in the dust, without any further care of this Master-piece of the Creation? Or is it possible, that God should suffer such a considerable species of Creatures to be cast away for ever, and to miss of their blessed End, and none of them to attain unto felicity, unto which it appears that he intended them at their Creation, by granting unto them noble faculties, capable of Bliss?

We see that all visible things were made with an intent to turn to the benefit of some Beings more Perfect. And for whom was Man created? The more he excels the rest in Perfections, the more honourable conceit we may justly have for him for whose Glory he came into the world: And from the nature of man, and the place of honour that he maintains amongst the Creatures, we may conclude, that this Prince of the lower World was created onely for the enjoyment of the Prince of the superiour, and that he unto whom all visible things do render Homage, owes his Respects and Being only unto the Creator. Our nature therefore designs us for the immediate fruition of God, and those inward

inward ſuggeſtions that perſwade us to make our frequent addreſſes unto him, eſpecially at the ſight of imminent dangers, do proceed from this deſign, and do tend as well to prepare us for a more immediate correſpondency, as to ſupply our preſent neceſſities: And how is it poſſible to be advanced to that honour without a diſpoſition, and without inward and outward qualities ſutable to that eſtate. From hence we may confirm the promiſe of this Crown of Life, and ſhew how every part is conſiſtent with the condition of a glorified Creature, and abſolutely required for the accompliſhment of our happineſs.

Examine alſo, I beſeech you, wherefore Man onely of all creatures enjoyes a being between the ſpiritual and the ſenſitive? wherefore doth he participate of both? Not that he might fall down to a greater conformity with Beaſts, for that is againſt the order of Nature, that teaches all things to aſpire to perfection, but rather that he might endeavour to aſcend to a higher degree; for no other intent man was made with a poſsibility of elevation, with capacious faculties, and with noble and aſpiring affections, but that they might raiſe him above that rank in which he was firſt placed and nearer his Creator. Therefore mankind was intended for a glorious and a happy End; whoever employs all his endeavours to attain unto it, can never miſs of his purpoſe; and if ſo many do never come to that perfect Eſtate, they may thank their unworthy behaviour, and vicious diſpoſition. But Chriſt that promiſeth this Crown unto the faithful, removes the grand impediments of Salvation, Guilt and Corruption, and brings them to that eſtate. So that beſides the helps of nature, they only have an Almighty Power, and an Infinite goodneſs for their aſſiſtants.

Beatitudo in excelſo eſt ſed volenti penetrabilis. Sen. Epiſt. 65.

We may therefore conclude from the former reaſons,

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That there is ſuch an Eſtate as happineſs: That man was deſigned for it: that it is poſsible for him to arrive unto it: that whoever is faithful to Chriſt, and labours to follow the rules preſcribed by him, muſt needs according to the natural courſe of things become happy, which cannot be in a perfect manner, but by an union and communion with his God. That this happineſs is not attainable in this life, I need not ſpend my labours in vain to prove, therefore it muſt be in another.

Now this Crown is called a Gift: *I will give thee*, &c. It is freely beſtowed notwithſtanding our undeſervings; it is recovered for us by the blood of Chriſt, and enriched with more precious Jewels, becauſe of his Infinite merits; and the means by which we are raiſed to this Eſtate, is procured unto us by our Saviours ſufferings and Aſcenſion. So that what Nature had intended, and was not able to perform, becauſe of our Apoſtacy and revolt from a dependency upon God, grace doth fully accompliſh in the faithful.

In the laſt place, I might bring to confirm this truth the common Reaſons upon which the Heathens did build the hopes of a future happineſs, and of another life: Of the Juſtice of God, that will render unto every one according to his deeds: Of the Goodneſs of God, that cannot be forgetfull of thoſe that mind the advance of his Glory on Earth; and of the Power of God, able to reward them that lead a juſt and a religious life. From hence *Zoroaſtes*, that learned Genius and great Prince taught his Diſciples, That the chief care of man ſhould be ſo to behave himſelf now, that he might come to happineſs hereafter: Many other reaſons may be brought to confirm this important truth, but I cannot include them all in ſo narrow a compaſs as a Sermon. Some, I know, ſtumble at the difficulties of the Reſurrection of our bodies, when it is proved to them by

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their experience that it is posible: Consider I beseech you, if a lesser power be not required, to restore what was than to create, or to make what was not: Where was this world before its Creation? and if that be doubted, where was this age 200 years ago? not so much as in appearance, yet now it subsists. Why shall not therefore that same intelligent Being, who created the World, and who onely is able to have formed us in the womb, with all our members so well proportioned, be able to restore us to our subsistance again, seeing there is as great a disposition in the essential parts of the body reduced to ashes, to return to their former shapes, as there is in the original substance to dilate it self, and form the several members of a man. I might here alledge the natural experiments which some have tried with success: That have given occasion to believe, that the forms of things do remain in their ashes: The herb called by the Greeks * Φοίνιξ doth rise again out of the dust, when it hath been consumed to ashes: This causes the Fable of the *Phanix*. I could also bring Nature and Providence to attest this truth; both are full of sacred emblems of the Resurrection: they are as incredible, did they not daily appear before our eyes. The faithful therefore may brave this and all other difficulties in the language of St. *Paul, I am perswaded that neither death nor life, &c. shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. And henceforth is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give me at that day. I will give thee a crown, &c.*

Si ergo potens est Deus facere quod non fuit nonne potest reparare quod fuit? Aug. lib. de catech. Serm. 1. *Secret dons oncomprent que quoy que le corps meure. Les formes sont pourtant aux cendres leur demeure.*

* It signifies not onely a Palm, but another herb mentioned by *Dioscor.* lib. 4. cap. 151. and by *Cal. Rodigin.* *Resurrectio non est contra naturam.* Aug. in Sent. suis.

Cast your eyes Christians once more upon this Crown of Life; View the Blessedness; the Riches, the Glory and Honour of this Estate; and tell me whether this deserves not our obedience, and a perseverance in Duty: It shall be free from all weakness, pain, fear, and in-

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conveniency; it shall be accompanied with unspeakble joyes and pleasures; with the fruition of all good; with the Vision of God, and with an eternal communion and union with him; It shall be adorned with all perfections, holiness and content. O rich and glorious Crown! O Immortal Reward! How long shall we be at such a distance from thee? Earthly Crowns are troublesome, and the more glorious they are, the more heavy; insomuch that *Diocletian* having exchanged one for a Spade, and the Empire for a Garden; when some were sent to perswade him to return to his former State, he told them they would never have undertaken that message unto him, if they had but seen the Ranks of Trees, and the Muskmelons that he had planted, with the pleasure that he did feel in that retired condition. But this Crown is of another nature; the glories and honours are sweetned with unspeakable delights, and there is no such wait as should make us weary of the carriage: Let therefore this consideration encourage us to encounter Death without fear, seeing it is a passage into this immortal Bliss, and to prepare our selves for its enjoyment by a behaviour worthy of a Crown. Be faithful unto the interest of Christ, and his Religion; maintain his honour in the management of your several employes; follow his sacred footsteps; shake off all vicious inclinations and customs: make it your business to reform your lives and affections; labour to relish the true pleasures of the soul, and wean your selves from all worldly enjoyments, that they may not hinder your entrance into this estate. Into which God of his mercy receive us, for the sake of his dear Son, and our Saviour, Christ Jesus. *Amen.*

FINIS.